

Gas Network Ireland

Gas Forecast Statement 2022

SEA Screening Report

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1. Introduction

Gas Networks Ireland (referred to hereafter as GNI) is required to submit a ten-year Network Development Plan to the CRU in accordance with Article 22 of EU Directive 2009/73/EC and Article 11 of the EC1 (Internal Market in Natural Gas and Electricity) (Amendment) Regulations 2015.

Amendments to the EU Directive 2009/73/EC (enacted under EU2022/869 in May 2022) has revised the requirement for ten-year Network Development Plans from yearly, to bi-yearly. In interim years when a ten-year Network Development Plan is not requested by the CRU, GNI will produce a Gas Forecast Statement (GFS). A GFS provides a view of how the gas network may develop over a ten-year period. It is based on current supply and demand for gas, as well as projections for growth in gas consumption and development of infrastructure.

Arup has been commissioned by GNI to carry out Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) screening of the GFS.

SEA screening is defined in the relevant guidance documents¹ as *“the process for deciding whether a particular plan, other than those for which SEA is mandatory, would be likely to have significant environmental effects, and would thus warrant SEA.”*

The purpose of this document is to carry out a screening exercise to determine, in respect of the GFS, if SEA is required to be carried out in accordance with the European Directive 2001/42/EC on the Assessment of the Effects of Certain Plans and Programmes on the Environment (“SEA Directive”) as transposed by the European Communities (Environmental Assessment of Certain Plans and Programmes) Regulations 2004 (S.I. 435 of 2004), as amended.

This SEA Screening Report provides the findings of the SEA screening process for the 2022 GFS.

2. Strategic Environmental Assessment

Strategic Environmental Assessment SEA is *‘the formal, systematic evaluation of the likely significant environmental effects of implementing a plan or programme before a decision is made to adopt that plan or programme.’* (Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government, 2004).

The SEA process is comprised of the following steps:

- Screening: Decision on whether or not SEA of a Plan or Programme is required. This is the current stage of the SEA process to which this report relates.

If SEA is considered to be required following Screening, the following steps are required:

- Scoping: Consultation with the defined statutory bodies on the scope and level of detail to be considered in the assessment;
- Environmental Assessment: An assessment of the likely significant impacts on the environment as a result of the Plan or Programme;
- Preparation of an Environmental Report;
- Consultation on the Plan or Programme and associated Environmental Report;

¹ *Implementation of SEA Directive (2001/42/EC): Assessment of the Effects of Certain Plans and Programmes on the Environment- Guidelines for Regional Authorities and Planning Authorities* (Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government, 2004)

- Evaluation of the submissions and observations made on the Plan or Programme and Environmental Report; and
- Issuance of a SEA Statement identifying how environmental considerations and consultation have been integrated into the Final Plan or Programme.

SEA is intended to provide the framework for influencing decision-making at an earlier stage when plans and programmes - which give rise to individual projects - are being developed. SEA should result in more sustainable development through the systematic appraisal of policy options.

3. Guidance and Legislation

3.1 Legislative Overview

The SEA Directive - Directive 2001/42/EC on the Assessment of the Effects of Certain Plans and Programmes on the Environment - requires that an environmental assessment is carried out of certain plans and programmes which are likely to have significant effects on the environment.

The objective of the SEA Directive is ‘to provide for a high level of protection of the environment and to contribute to the integration of environmental considerations into the preparation and adoption of plans...with a view to promoting sustainable development’ (Article 1 SEA Directive 2001).

Ireland made the decision to transpose the SEA Directive into Irish law in 2004 through two separate statutory instruments or regulations, one specifically concerning specific listed town and country/land use plans (S.I. 436/2004) and one concerning all other sectors (S.I. 435/2004). The transposing regulations are as follows:

- European Communities (Environmental Assessment of Certain Plans and Programmes) Regulations (S.I. 435/2004); and
- Planning and Development (Strategic Environmental Assessment) Regulations (S.I. 436/2004).

Both pieces of legislation were amended in 2011 through the following amendment regulations:

- European Communities (Environmental Assessment of Certain Plans and Programmes) Amendment Regulations (S.I. 200/2011); and
- Planning and Development (Strategic Environmental Assessment) Amendment Regulations (S.I. 201/2011).

The SEA Directive has also been given effect through other Irish legislation. An example being, the Planning and Development Act [PDA] 2000, as amended, which includes a specific requirement to carry out and facilitate SEA alongside the preparation of the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategies; and the Water Services Act 2007, as amended, requires that: “*The purpose for which this Act is enacted includes giving effect to so much of the following as relates to water services*” - listing specifically Directive 2001/42/EC (EPA, Good Practice Guidance on Screening, 2021).

3.2 Guidance Documents

A number of national guidance documents on SEA were reviewed in the preparation of this SEA Screening Report, including:

- SEA Screening Good Practice Guidance (EPA, 2021)
- Development of Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) Methodologies for Plans and Programmes in Ireland (EPA, 2003)

- Implementation of SEA Directive (2001/42/EC): Assessment of the Effects of Certain Plans and Programmes on the Environment- Guidelines for Regional Authorities and Planning Authorities (Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government, 2004)
- Implementation of Directive 2001/42 on the Assessment of the Effects of Certain Plans and Programmes on the Environment (European Commission, ND)
- SEA Resource Manual for Local and Regional Planning Authorities (EPA, 2015)
- Integrating Climatic Factors into Strategic Environmental Assessment in Ireland - A Guidance Note (EPA, 2019)
- Synthesis Report on Developing Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) Methodologies For Plans and Programmes in Ireland (EPA, 2019)

4. Gas Forecast Statement 2022

4.1 Legislative Background

GNI is a wholly owned subsidiary of Ervia and was established in accordance with the Gas Regulation Act 2013, as amended. It owns and operates the natural gas transmission and distribution networks in Ireland.

As Ireland's gas Transmission System Operator (TSO), GNI is required to submit a ten-year Network Development Plan to the CRU in accordance with Article 22 of EU Directive 2009/73/EC and Article 11 of the EC1 (Internal Market in Natural Gas and Electricity) (Amendment) Regulations 2015.

Amendments to the EU Directive 2009/73/EC (enacted under EU2022/869 in May 2022) has revised the requirement for ten-year Network Development Plans from yearly, to bi-yearly. In interim years when a ten-year Network Development Plan is not requested by the CRU, GNI will produce a Gas Forecast Statement (GFS). A GFS provides a view of how the gas network may develop over a ten-year period. It is based on current supply and demand for gas, as well as projections for growth in gas consumption and development of infrastructure.

4.2 Plan Overview

4.2.1 Gas Trend in Ireland 2021/2022

Annual Republic of Ireland (ROI) gas demands for 2021/22 are anticipated to be 0.5% below 2020/21 demands. ROI gas demand for 2020/21 was 4% lower than 2019/20. This is in contrast with previous years' increases in ROI gas demand of 1.5% in 2019/20 compared to 2018/19 and 2% in 2018/19 compared to 2017/18. In the Power Generation sector, demand for 2021/22 is projected to show an increase of 5.5% above 2020/21. This is in contrast with the 7% decrease in gas demand observed for power generation in 2020/21 compared to 2019/20, which was a result of several gas-fired generator outage in the summer of 2020/21.

Gas demand for power generation increase by 2% between 2019/20 and 2018/19 and, over the longer-term, Power Generation sector gas demand has increased by 34% when compared to 2014/2015. The increase in power sector gas demands in this period, despite growth in wind capacity, can be attributed to increasing electricity demand, the closure of peat-fired generators, sustained outages at some other thermal plants (i.e. coal and oil) and the flexible nature of gas-fired generation. Following the introduction of updates to the wholesale electricity market in October 2018, electrical interconnector behaviour has generally been efficient in that the interconnectors are mainly importing to Ireland when Irish electricity prices are higher than Great Britain's (GB) markets and exporting at times of high wind when Irish electricity prices are lower than in GB.

The Industrial & Commercial sector annual gas demand for 2021/22 is anticipated to be up to 7.6% lower than in 2020/21.

Within the Industrial and Commercial sector, Daily Metered (DM)² demand is projected to decrease by 6% in 2021/22, while the Non-Daily Metered³ (NDM) portion of Industrial and Commercial demand is anticipated to decrease by 8.5%. It is worth noting that the NDM sector is heavily influenced by weather and that this figure is not weather corrected.

Residential demand is projected to increase by 13% for 2021/22. As of end-June 2022, Composite Weather Variable and Degree Day are 6.5% and 13% lower respectively year-on-year (October to June inclusive), which correlates with the fact that Residential demand for these months was 11% lower than the same period in 2020/21.

Transport sector gas demand is projected to increase slightly (5%) in 2021/22, as the roll-out of a nationwide Compressed National Gas (CNG) fuelling network continues.

Total Gas Networks Ireland annual system gas demand for 2021/22 is anticipated to decrease by 1.6% compared to the previous year's gas demand. As noted in Section 4.2 of 2022 GFS, ROI gas demand is projected to fall slightly by 0.5% in 2021/22 compared to the previous year. Northern Ireland (NI) and Isle of Man (IOM) gas demand is anticipated to decrease by 5.6% against 2020/21. The overall throughput for ROI in 2021/22 is projected to be 55,900 GWh or approximately 5.09 billion cubic meters (bcm).

4.2.2 Future Forecast

In order to inform how the gas network may develop over a ten-year period, and to provide a comprehensive analysis, Gas Networks Ireland has developed three gas demand scenarios for the period 2021/22 to 2030/31, namely Low, Best Estimate and High demand scenarios. These scenarios are designed to represent a broad range of likely outcomes and are informed by a range of external and internal factors.

In the Best Estimate demand scenario, annual ROI gas demand is expected to fall by 12% between 2021/22 and 2030/31. Similarly, in the Low demand scenario, a decrease in ROI gas demand is predicted over the same horizon of 22% while a slight increase in annual gas demand of 3% is projected in the High demand scenario. The decrease in both the Best Estimate and Low scenarios is primarily driven by the anticipated fall in gas demand in both the Power Generation and Residential sectors. The trend in Power Generation demand is linked to increased electrical interconnection and an ambitious build-out target assumes for offshore wind and solar generation in Ireland coupled with revised electricity system constraints designed to achieve a 70% renewable energy share in electricity generation by 2030. These factors offset any growth forecast in electrical demand in the Best Estimate and Low scenarios is primarily driven by the anticipated fall in gas demand in both the Power Generation and Residential sectors. The trend in Power Generation demand is linked to increased electrical interconnection and an ambitious build-out target assumed for offshore wind and solar generation in Ireland coupled with revised electricity system constraints designed to achieve a 70% renewable energy share in electricity generation by 2030. These factors offset any growth forecast in electrical demand in the Best Estimate and Low scenarios. In contrast, the slight growth in the High demand scenario is driven by the assumption that the 70% Renewable Energy Sources use in Electricity (RES-E) target will not be met in 2030, falling short by 6%. Assumptions for wind and solar capacity development rates are based on the build-out profiles provided in the EirGrid / SONI All-Island Generation Capacity Statement (GSC) 2022-2031. Should these challenging targets not be met the result would be an increase in annual gas demand in all scenarios, relative to the projections presented.

4.2.3 Plan Area

GNI maintains over 14,664 km of gas pipelines and two sub-sea interconnectors.

² In this instance Daily Metered (DM) customers refers to Daily Metered (DM) and Large Daily Metered (LDM) customers i.e. any customer which consumes over 5.55 GWh annually

³ The Non-Daily Metered (NDM) sector refers to those who consume less than 5.55 GWh of gas annually. This covers small I/C and residential properties.

The GNI transmission network includes onshore Scotland, interconnectors and the onshore ROI network. The interconnector (IC) sub-system comprises of two subsea interconnectors between ROI and Scotland; and compressor stations at Beattock and Brighthouse Bay. The interconnector system connects to GB's National Transmission System (NTS) at Moffat in Scotland.

It also supplies gas to the NI market at Twynholm and the IOM market via the second subsea interconnector (IC2).

The GFS Plan area is identified in Figure 4.1.



Figure 4.1 GFS Plan Area

5. SEA Screening Methodology

5.1 SEA Screening Methodology

The procedure broadly follows the SEA Decision Tree adapted from the research report Development of Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) Methodologies for Plans and Programmes (P/P) in Ireland (Scott and Marsden, 2001), the adaptation of such is shown in Figure 5.1 below.

According to the EPA guidance, the screening process comprises three principal stages:

1. Applicability
2. Screening
3. Determination

The guidance states that the overall characteristics of the plan or programme should first be considered, by means of Stage 1 ‘Applicability’ check to see if it falls within the requirements of the SEA Directive.

Should this Stage 1 Applicability check determine that the plan or programme is of a type that falls within the requirements of the SEA Directive, the potential environmental significance of implementing the proposed plan or programme should then be considered, against the significance criteria outlined in Annex II (2) of the SEA Directive (Stage 2 ‘Screening’).

EPA guidance for the Screening process is outlined in Figure 5.1.

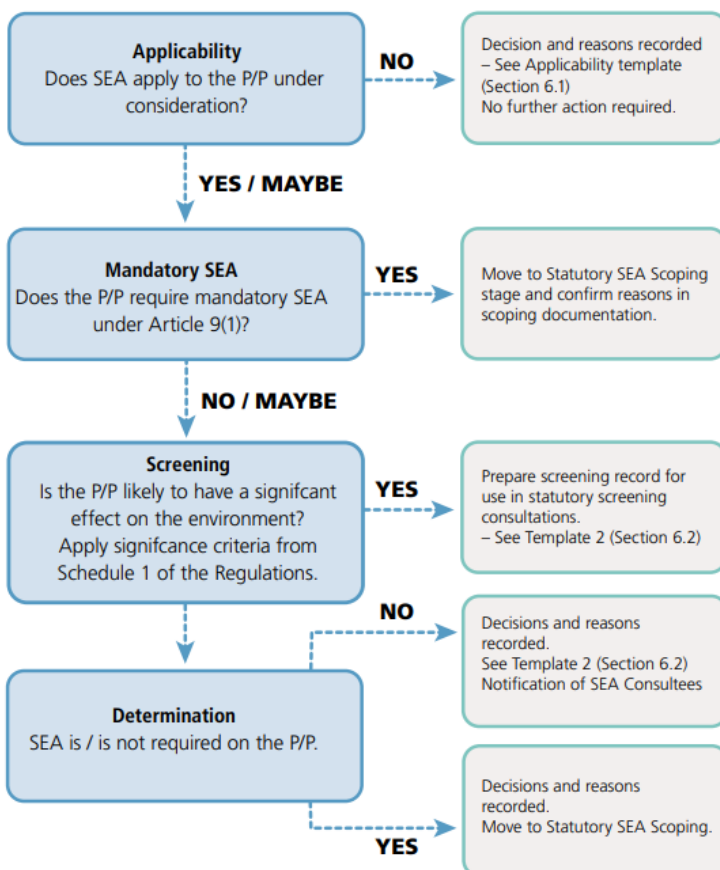


Figure 5.1 SEA Screening Process under S.I. 435/2004, as amended Source: (EPA, Good Practice Guidance on Screening, 2021)

5.2 Stage 1 ‘Applicability’

The Applicability Stage of Screening consists of a four-step process. As outlined in Table 5.1 below:

Table 5.1 Stage 1 ‘Applicability’ Steps Source: (EPA, Good Practice Guidance on Screening, 2021)

Step 1:	Establish the status of the plan or programme-making body Is the P/P prepared and/or adopted by an authority at national, regional or local level or prepared by an authority for adoption through a legislative procedure by Parliament or Government?
Step 2:	Establish the nature of the plan or programme Is the P/P required by legislative, regulatory, or administrative provisions?
Step 3:	Check the plan or programme is not exempt Is the sole purpose of the P/P for national defence, civil emergency or finance / budget?
Step 4:	Check if the plan or programme requires mandatory SEA Is the P/P prepared for agriculture, forestry, fisheries, energy, industry, transport, waste management, water management, telecoms, tourism, town and country planning or land use ¹³ and does the P/P set the framework for future development consent of projects listed in the Annexes of the EIA Directive; or Will the P/P require assessment under Art. 6 or 7 of the EU Habitats Directive?

There are three possible outcomes following Stage 1 Applicability Screening:

- **The SEA Directive does not apply**- The P/P is not of a type which falls within the remit of the SEA Directive / SEA Regulations. It is recommended as good practice to keep a note of the deliberations alongside the P/P on the relevant website, alongside the AA screening determination. There is no requirement to notify the environmental authorities.
- **The SEA Directive does apply**- The P/P is of a type which falls within the remit of the SEA Directive / SEA Regulations and requires mandatory SEA. Proceed to SEA Scoping and statutory consultation with the designated environmental authorities. The Screening outcome should be confirmed within the SEA Scoping Report.
- **The SEA Directive may apply**-The P/P may be within the remit of the SEA Directive as either it relates to use of a small area at local level or minor modifications to a relevant P/P, it is a P/P which may set the framework for future development consent even though not listed as a P/P type, or there is uncertainty in relation to any of the provisions considered at the Applicability Stage, and so a case-by-case determination will be required. Proceed to Stage 2 Screening.

An Applicability Screening template (‘**Template 1**’) is provided in the EPA guidance document and is utilised in Section 6.1 of this SEA Screening Report.

5.3 Stage 2 ‘Screening’

Stage 2 consists of determining, on a case-by-case basis, if SEA is required for a Plan or Programme which has characteristics that may give rise to significant effects or for which there is uncertainty on key characteristics. Although an SEA Screening Report is not a mandatory requirement in the legislation it has become embedded good practice and is the recommended approach in this guidance note.

The Screening Stage consists of a four-step process, outlined in Table 5.2, as set out in the EPA’s Good Practice Guidance on SEA Screening Report.

Table 5.2 Summarised Stage 2 ‘Screening’ Steps Source: (EPA, Good Practice Guidance on Screening, 2021)

Step 5:	Describe the characteristics of the P/P and the receiving environment including any environmental problems.
Step 6:	Identify the potential for significant environmental effects
Step 7:	Statutory consultation with Designated Environmental Authorities
Step 8:	Draft Determination

Stage 2 of the SEA Screening methodology consists of an environmental significance screening, which may be undertaken to assess whether a plan or programme, which has not been screened out by the ‘Applicability Stage’, is likely to result in significant environmental effects and should therefore, be taken forward for SEA.

An SEA Screening template (‘**Template 2**’) is provided in the EPA guidance document and is utilised in Section 6.1 of this SEA Screening Report.

Annex II of the SEA Directive sets out the “statutory” criteria that should be addressed when undertaking the ‘Screening Stage’. Annex II of the SEA Directive is transposed into national legislation as Schedule 1 ‘Criteria for determining whether a Plan or Programme (or Modification thereto) is likely to have significant effects on the Environment’ of the European Communities (Environmental Assessment of Certain Plans and Programmes) Regulations 2004, as amended.

The ‘Significance Criteria’ and sub-criteria are outlined below.

4. The characteristics of the plan or programme, or modification to a plan or programme, having regard, in particular, to:

- *The degree to which the plan or programme, or modification to a plan or programme, sets a framework for projects and other activities, either with regard to the location, nature, size and operating conditions or by allocating resources;*
- *The degree to which the plan or programme, or modification to a plan or programme, influences other plans including those in a hierarchy;*
- *The relevance of the plan or programme, or modification to a plan or programme, for the integration of environmental considerations in particular with a view to promoting sustainable development;*
- *Environmental problems relevant to the plan or programme, or modification to a plan or programme;*
- *The relevance of the plan or programme, or modification to a plan or programme, for the implementation of European Union legislation on the environment (e.g. plans and programmes linked to waste management or water protection).*

5. Characteristics of the effects and of the area likely to be affected, having regard, in particular, to

- *The probability, duration, frequency and reversibility of the effects;*
- *The cumulative nature of the effects;*
- *The transboundary nature of the effects;*
- *The risks to human health or the environment (e.g. due to accidents);*
- *The magnitude and spatial extent of the effects (geographical area and size of the population likely to be affected);*
- *The value and vulnerability of the area likely to be affected due to:*
 - *special natural characteristics or cultural heritage;*
 - *exceeded environmental quality standards or limit values;*
 - *intensive land-use.*

The effects on areas or landscapes which have a recognised national, European Union or international protection status.”

5.4 Stage 3 ‘Determination’

As soon as practicable after making the final determination as to whether SEA is required or not, the plan maker should make a copy of the decision, including, as appropriate, the reasons for requiring or not requiring an environmental assessment, available for public inspection at the P/P offices and on the website.

The P/P maker should also send a copy of the final determination to the relevant SEA environmental authorities notified during screening. This determination should stay linked to the P/P or modification on the website to ensure transparency and provide important information on decision making during the lifetime of the P/P or if any modifications are made.

6. SEA Screening

6.1 Stage 1 – SEA ‘Applicability’

As outlined in Section 5.2, Stage 1 ‘Applicability’ of the SEA Screening methodology constitutes the use of Template 1, based upon the relevant Applicability steps. Template 1 is reproduced as Table 6.1.

Table 6.1 Template 1 Stage 1 ‘Applicability’ of SEA Screening. Source: (EPA, Good Practice Guidance on Screening, 2021)

General Details	
Type and title of P/P:	Gas Forecast Statement 2022
Name of P/P Maker:	Gas Networks Ireland
Date:	2022
Step 1 of the Applicability Screening	<p>Status of P/P maker</p> <p>Is the P/P prepared and/or adopted by an authority at national, regional or local level or prepared by an authority for adoption through a legislative procedure by Parliament or Government?</p> <p>Yes. GNI is a subsidiary of Ervia, a commercial semi-state multi-utility company with responsibility for the delivery of gas and water infrastructure and services in Ireland. Ervia reports to the Commission for Regulation of Utilities (CRU) who perform their functions on behalf of the Department of Environment, Climate and Communications. A competent authority for the purpose of SEA is defined under S.I. No. 435 of 2004 as “the authority which is, or the authorities which are jointly, responsible for the preparation of a plan or programme, or modification to a plan or programme”. As such, the GFS can be considered a document prepared by ‘an authority’ at a national level.</p> <p>Is the P/P required by legislative, regulatory, or administrative provisions?</p> <p>No As outlined in Section 1 and Section 5, Amendments to the EU Directive 2009/73/EC (enacted under EU2022/869 in May 2022) has revised the requirement for ten-year Network Development Plans from yearly, to bi-yearly. In interim years when a ten-year Network Development Plan is not requested by the CRU, GNI will produce a GFS. There is no legislative requirement to produce a GFS</p>

General Details		
	Type and title of P/P: Gas Forecast Statement 2022	
	Name of P/P Maker: Gas Networks Ireland	
	Date: 2022	
Step 2 of the Applicability Screening	Nature of the P/P	
	Is the P/P prepared for agriculture, forestry, fisheries, energy, industry, transport, waste management, water management, telecommunications, tourism, town and country planning or land use?	<p>Yes. (Energy).</p> <p>The GFS provides a view of how the gas network in Ireland may develop over a ten-year period. It is based on current supply and demand for gas, as well as projections for growth in gas consumption and development of infrastructure. The GFS is therefore considered to represent a plan prepared for the “energy” sector.</p>
	Does the P/P provide a framework for the development consent for projects listed in the EIA Directive?	<p>No.</p> <p>The GFS is a non-statutory document which provides a view of how the gas network may develop over a ten-year period. It is based on current supply and demand for gas, as well as projections for growth in gas consumption and development of infrastructure.</p>
	Is the P/P likely to have a significant effect on a Natura 2000 site which leads to a requirement for Article 6 or 7 assessments?	<p>No.</p> <p>The 2022 GFS in itself will not give rise to any infrastructure projects, nor does it dictate land-use. Thus, the 2022 GFS is not likely to have a significant effect on a Natura 2000 site.</p>
Step 4 of the Applicability Screening	Exemptions	
	Is the sole purpose of the P/P to serve national defence or civil emergency or is it a financial/budget P/P or is it co-financed by the current SF/RDF programme?	<p>No.</p> <p>The sole purpose of the GFS is not to serve national defence or civil emergency, and the Plan is not a financial budget, or co-financed by the current Structural Funds and Regional Development Funds programme.</p>
	Conclusion	
	<p>Summarise the relevant information informing the assessment and the main reasons the P/P does or does not fall within the scope of the SEA Directive.</p> <p>Does fall within scope:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The plan does apply to one or more of the sectors in the SEA Directive and does provide a framework for development consent of projects requiring EIA AND/OR the plan is likely to have a significant effect on a Natura 2000 site and, therefore, requires an assessment under Article 6(3) of the Habitats Directive. SEA is therefore required. 	<p>While the GFS could be considered an Energy Plan which is prepared by a national authority, it is not required by legislative, regulatory, or administrative provisions. The GFS does not set a framework for the development consent for projects listed in the EIA Directive, nor is it likely to have a significant effect on a Natura 2000 site. The sole purpose of the GFS is not to serve national defence or civil emergency or is it a financial/budget P/P, nor is it co-financed by the current SF/RDF programme.</p> <p>In conclusion:</p> <p>The GFS does not fall within the Scope of the SEA Directive.</p> <p>The plan does not apply to any of the sectors in the SEA Directive and does not provide a framework for development consent of projects requiring EIA</p> <p>AND</p> <p>The plan is not likely to have a significant effect on a Natura 2000 site and therefore does not require an assessment under Article 6(3) of the Habitats Directive. SEA is therefore not required.</p>

General Details	
Type and title of P/P:	Gas Forecast Statement 2022
Name of P/P Maker:	Gas Networks Ireland
Date:	2022
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There is uncertainty about the nature of the P/P and whether it may give rise to significant effects on the environment. The plan cannot be screened out for SEA or AA and requires a more detailed screening assessment. <p>Does NOT fall within scope:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The plan does not apply to any of the sectors in the SEA Directive and does not provide a framework for development consent of projects requiring EIA, <p>AND</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The plan is not likely to have a significant effect on a Natura 2000 site and therefore does not require an assessment under Article 6(3) of the Habitats Directive. SEA is therefore not required. <p>For outcome 1 the plan maker should advise that they will move forward to SEA scoping. For outcome 2 the P/P should move to Stage 2 Screening. For outcome 3 the applicability template should be completed and kept on file.</p>

6.2 Outcome of Stage 1 Applicability

Following the Stage 1 Applicability Screening, it can be determined that the SEA Directive does not apply to the GFS and that proceeding to Stage 2 Screening is not necessary in this case. The GFS is of a type of Plan/Programme which does not fall within the remit of the SEA Directive/SEA Regulations.

For the reasons stated in Table 5.1, it has been determined that SEA does not apply to the GFS. Therefore, the GFS will not be taken to Stage 2 Screening to determine whether SEA is necessary.

7. Conclusion

As outlined in Section 6.2, it has been determined that the SEA Directive does not apply to the GFS and that proceeding to Stage 2 Screening is not necessary in this case. The GFS is of a type of Plan/Programme which does not fall within the remit of the SEA Directive/SEA Regulations.

While the GFS could be considered an Energy Plan which is prepared by a national authority, it is not required by legislative, regulatory, or administrative provisions. The GFS does not set a framework for the development consent for projects listed in the EIA Directive, nor is it likely to have a significant effect on a Natura 2000 site. The sole purpose of the GFS is not to serve national defence or civil emergency or is it a financial/budget P/P, nor is it co-financed by the current SF/RDF programme.

In conclusion:

The GFS does not fall within the Scope of the SEA Directive.

While the plan could be considered an ‘energy’ sector plan, it does not provide a framework for development consent of projects requiring EIA

AND

The plan is not likely to have a significant effect on a Natura 2000 site and therefore does not require an assessment under Article 6(3) of the Habitats Directive. SEA is therefore not required.

8. References

SEA Screening Good Practice Guidance (EPA, 2021)

Development of Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) Methodologies for Plans and Programmes in Ireland (EPA, 2013).

Implementation of SEA Directive (2001/42/EC): Assessment of the Effects of Certain Plans and Programmes on the Environment- Guidelines for Regional Authorities and Planning Authorities (Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government, 2004) .

Implementation of Directive 2001/42 on the Assessment of the Effects of Certain Plans and Programmes on the Environment (European Commission, ND).

SEA Resource Manual for Local and Regional Planning Authorities (EPA, 2015).

Integrating Climatic Factors into Strategic Environmental Assessment in Ireland - A Guidance Note (EPA, 2019).

Synthesis Report on Developing A Strategic Environmental Assessment (Sea) Methodologies for Plans And Programmes In Ireland (EPA, 2003).